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REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORLD ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:

I: INTRODUCTION

1. The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), also known as the Brundtland report. crystallized the idea of environment and sustainable development. Its recommendations emphasized the multi-sectoral approach to environmental management. These recommendations were adopted by General Assembly resolution 42/187 on Environment and Development. By this resolution the General Assembly decided, among other things, that the Regional Commissions, whose mandate is on the social and economic development, should organize regional conference. These conferences were to be with Ministers of Environment, Planning and Education. They were also to include the representatives of Youth and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to propagate the ideas of environment and sustainable development.

2. It is within this context that, from 12 to 16 June 1989, over one hundred participants assembled in the Ugandan capital of Kampala to take part in the first African Regional Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development as an activity in the implementation of the resolutions mentioned above.[1]

3. The conference recognized the fact that African countries had taken some significant initiatives in developing institutions and capabilities for environmental management. These initiatives were indicative of the increasing awareness of the determining role of environmental management in Africa's social and economic development and they provided a basis for future actions. The conference, therefore, adopted an Agenda for Action towards sustainable development in Africa which identified the priority actions in the areas that were selected for discussion. To give this agenda the political leverage and impetus it deserved, the conference issued a Ministerial declaration, resolving itself to the implementation of the Agenda for Action towards Sustainable Development in Africa.

4. The Kampala Agenda has become the reference for environmental activities for sustaining development in the region and talking of the implementation of the recommendations of the World Commission must be within that context.

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[1] See document E/ECA/CM.16/19 of 19 February 1990.

II: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENDA FOR ACTION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA.

5. It might be too early to take full stock of the implementation of the Agenda for Action. However, it has been the point of reference in planning for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) scheduled for 1992 in Brazil. Since the Agenda for Action is being used as the basis for these preparatory process, these preparations will be dealt with in detail in this paper.

6. The Brundtland report was very instrumental in raising global awareness to a high peak. Emerging issues such as climate change and ozone depletion were among these issues. Since the adoption of the Kampala Agenda for Action, which came after the General Assembly of the United Nations decided, by resolution 43/196 of September, 1988, to study the feasibility of holding a global conference twenty years after Stockholm-1972, the same momentum has reached Africa.

7. After considering the Secretary-General's report on the feasibility of holding the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, it was decided by resolution 44/228 of September 1989, to hold the Conference in Brazil, to coincide with World Environment day on 5 June 1992. The conference would provide and opportunity to carry out a comprehensive review of the state of the environment since the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment.

8. The resolution also expressed deep concern about the continuing deterioration of the state of the environment and the serious degradation of the global life-support systems. This degeneration, if allowed to continue, could disrupt the global ecological balance. This would endanger the life-sustaining qualities of the Earth and lead to an ecological catastrophe. It was clearly recognized that decisive, urgent and global action was necessary to protect the ecological balance of the Earth. It further acknowledged the global character of environmental problems. Important among these were climate change and depletion of the ozone layer. All these required actions at the global, regional and national levels and involving the commitment and participation of all countries.

9. The responsibility for containing, reducing and eliminating global environmental damage, the General Assembly emphasized, must be borne by the countries causing it, in relation to the damage caused. This also called for international co-operation in the area of research, development and application of environmentally sound

policies and technologies. To do this, there was the need for new and additional financial resources to be channelled to the developing countries. This would ensure their full participation in the global efforts for environmental conservation.

10. Consistent with their mandates on social and economic development, the Regional Commissions were again asked to play an important role in the preparatory process. UNCED-1992 was not on isolated issues but on how packages of multi-sectoral environment programmes could be formulated and implemented to enhance and sustain the development process in each region.

11. In the light of the above considerations the following environmental issues, not listed in order of priority, were chosen for discussion at UNCED-1992:

(a) Protection of the quality and supply of fresh water resources;

(b) Protection of the ocean and all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas and coastal areas, the protection and rational use and development of their living resources;

(c) Conservation of biological diversity;

(d) Environmentally sound management of biotechnology;

(e) Environmentally sound management of wastes, particularly hazardous wastes, toxic chemicals and the prevention of illegal traffic in toxic and dangerous products and wastes;

(f) Protection of human health conditions and improvement of the quality of life;

(g) Protection of the atmosphere by combating climate change, depletion of the ozone layer and transboundary air pollution;

(h) Protection and management of land resources by, inter alia, combating deforestation, desertification and drought;

(i) Improvement of the living and working environment of the poor in urban slums and rural areas, through eradicating poverty, inter alia, by implementing integrated rural and urban development programmes, taking other appropriate measures at all levels necessary to stem the degradation of the environment.

12. Several objectives were identified for addressing these issues. Among them were:

(a) To identify strategies to be coordinated action regionally and globally to deal with them within a particular time frame.

(b) To recommend measures to be taken at the national and international levels to protect and enhance the environment. The measures should take into account the specific needs of developing countries, through the development and implementation of policies for sustainable and environmentally sound development. Specific emphasis should be placed on incorporating environmental concerns in the social and economic development process, and of various sectoral policies. Sources of environmental degradation should be identified and appropriate remedial measures taken against them.

(c) To identify ways and means of providing new and additional financial resources, particularly in developing countries, for environmentally sound development programmes. This should te in accordance with national development objectives, priorities and plans. Ways of establishing the effective monitoring of such programmes explicitly defined. This will facilitate the assessment of the progress in their implementation, based on accurate and reliable data.

(d) To promote the development of human resources, particularly in developing countries, for the protection and enhancement of the environment.

(e) To promote the development or strengthening of appropriate institutions at the national, regional and global levels for addressing environmental problems.

13. Although all the nine issues for UNCED-1992 are of concern to Africa, not all of them command the same priority interest. While addressing all these issues, therefore, emphasis must be given to those ones that are of pressing concern to the region. In other words, there are global problems to which Africa shares in the blame such as climate change and ozone depletion, but whose modalities for solution cannot be unilaterally prescribed across the board. This should be the thrust of preparations, in Africa, for the 1992 conference.

(i) Africa's perspective for 1992 and the Agenda for Action towards sustainable development:

14. To sharpen the focus of the preparatory process for Africa, the issues addressed in the Kampala Agenda for Action should be harmonized with those of the Conference. This having been done, problems must then be identified and solutions proposed in the form of programme activities which the UN system will play a major role in supporting. They could then be regrouped with the UNCED-1992 issues as suggested below. Problems are posed for each issue and the important questions to answer are (a) what integrated national, sub-regional and regional programmes can be strengthened/developed by member States/development agencies now in order to mitigate the problem? and (b) how best can all the UN agencies work together in assisting member States to address this multi-faceted and inter-agency problem?

(i) (a) Kampala Agenda issue: Preventing and reversing desertification,

(b) UNCED-1992 issue: Protection and management of land resources by, inter alia, combating deforestation, desertification and drought;

Problem :

15. Why have the on-going desertification control programmes in Africa not been as successful as had been anticipated?. What further sub-regional, regional and international support is required to make them work? What existing national, sub-regional and regional measures can be strengthened? How can they benefit from international action aimed at reversing desertification? Based on the findings, what specific proposals can be made as inputs into work of PrepCom? How can assistance be mobilized from the international community towards this? How can the measures proposed contribute to addressing the global issues such as serious food shortfalls, famine, climate change and the living environment of rural and urban poor?

(ii) (a) Kampala Agenda issue: Achieving food self-sufficiency and food security;

(b) UNCED-1992 issue(s): (i) Protection and management of land resources by, inter alia, combating deforestation, desertification and drought; (ii) conservation of biological diversity, (iii) environmentally sound management of biotechnology; (iv) Protection of the oceans and all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and of coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their living resources.

Problem :

16. Despite the food production potential of the region, it has not succeeded in achieving food self-sufficiency as indicated in (a) above. Why have the food programmes, past and on-going not been able to solve the problem? Where should the focus be placed in environmental management to achieve this? What regional and interregional co-operative actions can be taken to help in this direction (e.g. de-culturalization of dietary habits, science and technological base for agricultural production and the protection and management of land and sea as well as other water resources)? Is land tenure an impediment?

(iii) (a) Kampala Agenda issue: Ensuring efficient and equitable use of water resources.

(b) UNCED-1992 issue: Protection of the quality and supply of fresh water resources.

Problem :

17. How can on-going water resources development programmes be coordinated and, if possible, streamlined to better respond to drought and desertification control programmes, agricultural and agro-pastoral activities, small-scale energy production and the development of related rural low-cost technology. Sub-regional and regional activities are aimed mostly at river and lake basin development, how best can international support to enhance these programmes as contribution to addressing global environmental concern?

(iv) (a) Kampala Agenda issue: Securing greater energy self-sufficiency;

(b) UNCED-1992 issues: (i) Protection of the atmosphere by combating climate change, depletion of ozone layer and transboundary air pollution; (ii) Protection and management of land resources by, inter alia, combating deforestation, desertification and drought.

Problem :

18. The search for alternative sources of energy to fuelwood has been one of the crucial factors in desertification control and deforestation programmes in Africa. Past and on-going programmes do not seem to have had much impact on improving the situation. Where have the constrains been? Have there been acceptable alternatives?

What action is proposed at the national, sub-regional and regional levels that would strengthen local capabilities and attract international co-operation in alleviating the situation? How much information is available on the deforestation process underway in Africa and its impact on global warming?

(v) (a) Kampala Agenda issue: Optimizing industrial production.

(b) UNCED-1992 issue: (i) Environmentally sound management of wastes, particularly hazardous wastes, and of toxic chemicals, sa well as of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products and wastes.

Problem .

19. Industrialization is the key to development. Yet the environmental problems related to it are enormous and destructive. Africa is planning its Second Industrial Development Decade. UNCED issues do not directly address those of industrial technology and clean production. What are the major emerging environmental problems of industrial activity? what is the role the level of technology for handling industrial wastes of all types, generated within Africa? What strategies should be adopted for Africa to participate in the international management of industrial environmental problems including the working environment and pollution control?

(vi) (a) Kampala Agenda issue: Managing demographic change and pressures.

(b) UNCED-1992 issue(s): (i) Improvement of the living environment of the poor in urban and rural areas, through eradication poverty, inter alia, by implementing integrated rural and urban development programmes, as well as taking other appropriate measures at all levels necessary to stem the degradation of the environment. (ii) Protection of human health conditions and the improvement of the quality of life.

Problem .

20. The present population of the continent will likely double over the next two decades to a total of around 1 billion people. The urban population will likely quadruple. Its distribution is extremely imbalanced such that while some countries are definitely overpopulated, some are desperately underpopulated. Such trends will continue to create an imbalance in the crucial relationship between people, resources, environment and development.

21. What are the crucial population problems in Africa as they relate to the environment? Can these problems be generalized? How can population growth, its distribution and demographic change be managed in order to achieve a more equitable, productive and sustainable balance between people, resources, environment and development. What programmes need to be strengthened or developed to achieve these goals?

(vii) (a) Kampala Agenda issues: Maintaining species and ecosystems

(b) UNCED-1992 issues(s): (i) Protection and management of land resources by, inter alia, combating deforestation, desertification and drought, (ii) conservation of biological diversity, (iii) environmentally sound management of biotechnology; (iv) Protection of the oceans and all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and of coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their living resources.

Problem:

22. Tropical forests in Africa are being lost at the rate of over 3.7 million hectares annually. Most of it for export timber, harvested for local wood products and tourist artifacts, cleared for farm land, burnt down by bush fires or cut for fuel wood. What national, sub-regional and regional programmes can be implemented to protect and manage on a sustainable basis endangered animal and plant species and ecosystems in order to maintain biological diversity.

(ii) Strategies for implementing the UNCED-1992 preparatory process:

23. The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development affirms that "popular participation is, in essence, the empowerment of the people to effectively involve themselves in creating the structures and designing policies and programmes that serve the interests of all as well as to effectively contribute to the development process and share equitably in its benefits. Therefore, there must be an opening up of political process to accommodate freedom of opinions, tolerate differences, accept consensus on issues as well as ensure the effective participation of the people and their organizations and associations."

24. In this spirit, all the groups that should be involved in the environmental management decision making process. These groups include the youth, women, non-governmental organizations and business, both private and para-statal, must actively contribute to the preparatory process. All country reports should include their inputs. This will ensure that programme strategies are formulated with their participation in order all available national resources are utilized.

(iii) Areas of discussion during the preparatory conference:

25. There will be one main document for the preparatory conference. All UN agencies will contribute to the document as indicated in paragraph 33(i) above, particularly through country reports and their regional programme activities. This document will deal with:

(a) The relationship between the functioning of African economy and environmental problems; the economics of sustainability and environmentally sound development Planning;

(b) Review of the relevance and importance of each of the nine UNCED-1992 issues to environment and development in Africa; and

(c) Programmes and projects for implementing the Kampala Agenda for action towards sustainable development in Africa in the spirit of UNCED-1992; the mobilization of resources including public participation for environmental management and sustainable development:

(iv) Promotional activities:

26. To promote the understanding of the major environmental issues in Africa of the African preparatory process for UNCED-92, a number of promotional activities are foreseen. ECA, in collaboration with agencies of the UN system, is developing the following:

(a) Fact Sheet series to be distributed to the independent sector and Government offices of Member States. The first issue of the Fact Sheets will be distributed before the sub-regional meetings. The second issue before the Regional Preparatory Meeting (March 91), and the third issue in May 91. From then on there will be subsequent issues every two months until UNCED in June 92.

(b) Leaflet, to be produced by ECA after the African Preparatory Meeting, with the "African position" on environmental matters. The leaflet would have wide distribution within and outside Africa, primarily, but not exclusively, to the government and independent sectors.

(c) Radio interview/documentary series, to be produced by ECA in co-operation with the United Nations agencies and OAU. As much as possible following the frequency and themes covered by the Fact Sheet series, the radio programmes would include interviews with government, independent sector and intergovernmental agencies officials.

(d) Film/video : Resources permitting, a 15 minute long documentary on the African environment will be produced for presentation at UNCED.

27. With this preparation package it is hoped that Africa will make a strong representation at UNCED-1992.

28. The five United Nations Regional Economic Commissions have organized or are about to organize regional preparatory conferences. The reports of these conferences will be inputs into the activities of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the Conference. These regional meetings should be held preferably before August 1991 so that the results can be discussed during the third meeting of the PrepCom that month.

29. ECA will organize, with the collaboration of all UN agencies, the regional conference for Africa, tentatively in Egypt from 8 - 12 April 1991. Before then, a Forum of eminent persons specially Africans, to review the document.

30. The conference report to ECA conference of Ministers at its sixteenth session in April 1991. Then in May the report will also be presented to African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and subsequent to the summit of Heads of State and Governments of the Organization of African Unity, in June 1991.

31. It would be useful to note that in implementing the recommendations contained in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development and preparations for UNCED-1992, the countries of the Economic Commission for Europe have chosen four areas of discussion which they consider are of priority to them. They are:

(a) Awareness raising and public participation;

(b) The economics of sustainable development;

(c) Sustainable energy use; and

(d) sustainable industrial activity.

32. Co-operation between the countries of the ECE and the developing world was also one of the focusses of the discussion. Participating in this dialogue has been representatives of governments, business, voluntary environmental groups, youth, science and labour. The outcome of the conference will be Europe's input into the preparatory process for the UNCED-1992.

33. In order, therefore, that Africa should purposefully discuss African approaches to her environmental problems and participate in concrete terms in the dialogue regarding the global approach, her own priorities must be clear and practicable. While not sacrificing her self-reliant development interests, the priorities and strategies she chooses must be developed to facilitate the flow of resources from the North to Africa.

34. Considering the importance of the 1992 Conference within the context of the situation that will obtain in the North after that year, Africa must come out with a position for the Conference which will reflect her understanding of the issues as they affect her and the determination to actively address them.

35. Most importantly, institutions must be developed and/or for the training of manpower capabilities and administrative structures that will practically re-enforce environmental monitoring, assessment and evaluation. This must be a matter of policy.

36. This 1992 Conference must be considered within the context of the situation that will obtain in the rest of the world thereafter. Africa must, therefore, come out with a position for the Conference which will reflect her understanding of the issues as they affect her and the determination to effectively address them.

37. Africa must, under these circumstances, purposefully discuss African approaches to her pressing environmental problems. Thereafter, actively participate in concrete terms in the dialogue regarding the global approach, her own priorities must be clear and practicable. Within the framework of self-reliant development interests, the priorities and strategies that are chosen must be developed to facilitate global environmental management and the international flow of resources for that purpose.

38. Participants are requested to discuss the strategies outlined above and make recommendations to the ECA on the matter so as to ensure that the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development can be well carried out in Africa.